

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Amended) A method of controlling [the] transmission of a plurality of frequency channels, each of which has a frame format of substantially [the] a same constant frame period, ~~with each frame comprising a transmission burst of variable duration, comprising:~~

controlling [the] a timing of transmission of [the] a plurality of frames of each of said frequency channels, wherein each of the frames comprises a transmission burst of variable duration and an interval between bursts of variable duration, such that [the] a start of the transmission burst of [one] each of said frequency channels [is delayed relative to] differs from [the] a start of the transmission burst of [another one] other ones of said frequency channels, wherein the plurality of frequency channels are transmitted by a common transmitter.

2. (Amended) A method as claimed in claim 1, wherein [the] a start timing of the transmission burst of each of said frequency channels is different from that of [the] other ones of said frequency channels.

3. (Amended) A method of controlling [the] a transmission of a plurality of frequency channels, each of which has a frame format of substantially [the] a same constant frame period, comprising controlling [the] a timing of transmission of said frequency channels such that [the] a start timing of [the] a plurality of frames of each of said frequency channels differs from that of [the] other ones of said frequency channels, the method further comprising controlling [the] a transmission of a control channel including a plurality of sets of channel control data each relating to a corresponding one of said plurality of frequency channels such that said sets of control data are transmitted sequentially and [the] an order of starting of said frames of said frequency channels substantially corresponds to [the] an order of transmission of said sets of said channel control data.

4. (Original) A method as claimed in any preceding claim, wherein said plurality of frequency channels are each message traffic channels carrying one or more messages for selective message receivers.

5. (Amended) Apparatus for controlling [the] a transmission of a plurality of frequency channels, each of which has a frame format of substantially [the] a same constant frame period, [with each frame comprising a transmission burst of variable length,] comprising:

[means for controlling the timing of transmissions of the frames of each of said frequency channels such that the start of the transmission burst of one of said channels is delayed relative to the start of the transmission burst of another one of said channels]

a common transmitter for transmitting a plurality of frames in said frame format in said plurality of frequency channels and

a controller for controlling a timing of transmission of the frames of each of said frequency channels, wherein each frame comprises a transmission burst of variable duration and an interval between bursts of variable duration such that a start of the transmission burst of each of said frequency channels differs from a start of the transmission burst of other ones of said frequency channels, wherein

the controller is arranged to control said common transmitter for transmitting said plurality of frequency channels.

6. (Amended) Apparatus as claimed in claim 5, wherein the [means for controlling] controller is arranged to control [the] a start timing of the transmission burst of each of said frequency channels to be different from that of [the] other ones of said frequency channels.

7. (Amended) Apparatus for controlling [the] a transmission of a plurality of frequency channels, each of which has a frame format of substantially [the] a same constant frame period, comprising:

means for controlling [the] a timing of transmission of said frequency channels such that [the] a start timing of [the] a plurality of frames of each of said frequency channels differs from that of [the] other ones of said frequency channels, the apparatus further comprising means for controlling [the] a transmission of a control channel including a plurality of sets of channel control data each relating to a corresponding one of said plurality of frequency channels such that said sets are transmitted sequentially and [the] an order of starting of said frames of said frequency channels substantially corresponds to [the] an order of transmission of said sets of said channel control data.

8. (Original) Apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 7, wherein said plurality of frequency channels are each message traffic channels carrying one or more messages for selective message receivers.

9-17. (Cancelled).

18. (Amended) A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3 [4 or 9 to 13], wherein said steps of controlling transmission of said frequency channels comprises transmitting signals to a relay station such that the relay station transmits said frequency channels with [said] corresponding timing relationships.

19. (Amended) A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 3 [4 or 9 to 13], wherein said steps of controlling transmission of said frequency channels include transmitting said channels.

20. (Amended) Apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 7 [or 14 to 16], wherein said means for controlling transmission of said frequency channels includes means for transmitting signals to a relay station such that the relay station transmits said frequency channels with [said] corresponding timing relationships.

21. (Amended) Apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 7 [or 14 to 17] including means for transmitting said frequency channels.

22. (Amended) [A satellite earth station including] The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 7[, 14 to 17 or 20] , wherein the apparatus is included in a satellite earth station.

23. (Amended) [A terrestrial base station including] The apparatus as claimed in any one of claims 5 to 7[, 14 to 17 or 21] , wherein the apparatus is included in a terrestrial base station.

24-35. (Cancelled)

36. (New) A method as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, wherein each frame comprises only one said transmission burst and one said interval of variable duration.

37. (New) A method as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the transmission burst comprises a plurality of messages each containing a variable identity code identifying one or more terminals to which the respective message is addressed.

38. (New) A method as claimed in claim 37, wherein the messages are transmitted continuously within the transmission burst.

39. (New) Apparatus as claimed in claim 5 or claim 6, wherein each of the frames comprises only one said transmission burst and one said interval of variable duration.

40. (New) Apparatus as claimed in claim 5 or claim 6, wherein the transmission burst comprises a plurality of messages each containing a variable identity code identifying one or more terminals to which the respective message is addressed.

41. (New) Apparatus as claimed in claim 40, wherein the messages are transmitted continuously within the transmission burst.

42-52. (Cancelled).